Engaging stakeholders on tomato and other vegetable disease projects: Lessons learned & opportunities

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Background:

► Education:
  ▶ 1996 - B.S. - Biotechnology & Microbiology, NDSU, Fargo, ND
  ▶ 1998 - M.S. - Crop & Weed Sciences, NDSU, Fargo, ND
  ▶ 2003 - Ph.D. - Plant Pathology, UW, Madison, WI
  ▶ 2003-07 - Postdoctoral Scholar - Plant Pathology, UC, Davis, CA
  ▶ 2007 - Assistant Professor - Plant Pathology, GCREC, UF
  ▶ 2013 - Associate Professor - Plant Pathology, GCREC, UF
  ▶ 2014 - Associate Center Director & Associate Professor - GCREC, UF
    ▶ Split: 50% Research - 35% Extension - 15% Administration

► Family:
  ▶ Married with three active kids (9 - 22)
Just like you... I’m trying to balance a demanding career and a personal life...
Academics is all about funding, publishing, educating students and growers...
My view on engaging clientele...

GROWERS

Grower groups

Allied industries

Gov’t Agencies

US

UF/IFAS

The Land Grant Mission

My position with UF/IFAS gives me the ‘resources’ (support) to succeed in my goal to fulfill the ‘Land Grant’ mission.
Florida Vegetable Industry

2016 Florida Ag by the Numbers

- In 2016 Florida ranked:
  - 1st in the US in production value for fresh market snap beans, fresh market cucumbers, processing cucumbers, grapefruit, oranges, sugarcane, fresh market tomatoes, and watermelons
  - 2nd in production value for bell peppers, fresh market sweet corn, squash, and strawberries
  - 3rd in production value for fresh market cabbage and honey
  - 4th in production value for peanuts
  - FL Vegetable crop value - $1.33 Billion
  - All Florida Crops value - $6.1 billion

USDA/NASS - Florida Field Office
Florida Vegetable Industry

- Know thy stakeholder groups:
Florida Vegetable Industry

- Know thy stakeholders:

Numerous seed and chemical companies
My view on engaging clientele...

Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil, and you’re a thousand miles away from the corn field.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1956
My view on engaging clientele...
...keep it simple

- Utilize your county extension agents!!!
My view on engaging clientele...
...keep it simple

- Utilize your county extension agents!!!
- Reach out to growers & grower groups!
  - Be approachable
  - Be responsive
  - Show humility
  - Mutual respect...

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when your plow is a pencil,
and you’re a thousand miles
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Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1956
My view on engaging clientele...  
...keep it simple

- It’s all about developing a professional relationship!
- Earn the grower’s respect by being:
  - Approachable
  - Responsive
  - Reliable
- Understand the grower’s issues and develop a research/extension plan to help address those issues.

You know you're a farmer when...
you know more about the weather than the weatherman
More about tractors than a mechanic
AND MORE ABOUT YOUR LAND THAN ANYONE ELSE.
My view on engaging clientele...
...keep it simple

- Develop a team approach:
  - Extension agents
  - Industry
  - Growers
  - Other faculty:
    - Interdisciplinary
    - Multi-state
- Don’t get bogged down by politics/gossip (new faculty).

"You're this week's top person on the team pyramid."

http://funnypicture.org/wallpaper/2015/03/funny-cartoons-about-work-19-cool-wallpaper.jpg
Thank you...

The Land Grant Mission